

little bit I know always repelled me; the contradiction between claim and reality, between Goldschnitt and humility, between the pretense to have understood the one thing needful and the complete inability to come even within hailing distance of it – and all this of: »success.« You enabled me to understand better my dislike: this contempt for »theory« or »teaching« as linked up with his »democratism« and his »worldliness.« You surely did a useful and necessary job; I regret that in doing so you did him much too much honor.

Did you discover anything about the fate of Pines's introduction to his translation?

I plan to bring out an English translation of my book on Spinoza, and to supply it with a Preface. The preface will come as close to a autobiography as is compatible with propriety. I plan to take up Cohen's critique of Spinoza.

With kindest regards.

As ever yours,

Leo Strauss

45

[Chicago] November 21, 1962

Dear Scholem:

I am very grateful to you for having sent me your book on the mystical shape of the deity. I was again filled with admiration for your thought, although the subject matter is somewhat more remote from the field of my immediate interest than that of your last book. I am simply in the position of someone who has to learn, i. e. I have almost nothing to say about the details of your book. I was particularly interested in what you say on pages 154 and 169, i. e. about the inadequacy of the neo-Platonic One and the emanation to what the cabalists wish to say. Yet is something like this »undialectical« doctrine not necessary in order to secure the *basis* of the theosophy, as a kind of demonstration of the existence of God? Did not Abulafia say somewhere that the mystics start where the philosophers leave off, which would seem to imply that they cannot start if the philosophers have not laid the foundation? – Your argument on page 204, top, is not quite convincing to me; cf. *Philosophie und Gesetz*, page 78. Is the explanation of Rambam's uneasiness

not his awareness of the innovation? Does not all pseudepigraphy also presuppose such an awareness? – The contradiction (if it is a contradiction) regarding punishment in the other life and through migration of the souls occurs already at the beginning: the myth at the end of Plato's *Republic*. – As for the rehabilitation of Cain (page 223), it might be worthwhile to consult Narboni on *Guide* II 30 (Goldenthal 41 b). – I would be very grateful to you if you would let me know whether there is a cabalistic teaching regarding the noble lie.

Repeating the expression of my thanks, I remain

Yours very cordially,

Leo Strauss.

Greetings from both of us to both of you.

46

Jerusalem, den 28. November, 1962

Mein lieber Strauss,

Schönen Dank für Ihren Brief. Ich freue mich, dass Sie meine, reichlich abstrusen Gegenständen gewidmeten tiefsinnigen Erörterungen mit Gewinn lesen. Über solche Abstrusität kann der Leser Ihrer Einleitung zur englischen Übersetzung der »Religionskritik Spinozas« nicht klagen, welche ich bei meiner Rückkehr hier vorfand und höchst begierig verschlang. Selten haben Sie wohl Merkwürdigeres geschrieben. Ich betrachte es als eine intellektuelle Autobiographie von Ihnen, wo sich ein Abenteuer des Geistes (und dessen Scheitern) an das andere schliesst. Das einzige, was ich daran auszusetzen haben, ist, dass Sie einige Stadien Ihrer Autobiographie darin zu überspringen scheinen. Die Leser, die von Ihnen weniger als ich wissen, besonders die armen Amerikaner, die von Tuten und Blasen wenig gehört haben, werden von Ihrer Lektüre wohl bass erstaunt sein, auf Englisch baffled. Kommt das wirklich in den Druck hinein? Vorläufig hebe ich die Kopie des Manuskriptes fein säuberlich auf, denn wer weiss, ob Sie das Manuskript nicht im letzten Moment »als Apokryph erklären«, also in einem Söller oder Keller verbergen, wie für so leicht anstössige Literatur seit jeher üblich war.

Für Ihren Hinweis auf Narbonis Rechtfertigung des sinisteren Charakters von Kain bin ich sehr dankbar. Leider kann ich Ihnen aber